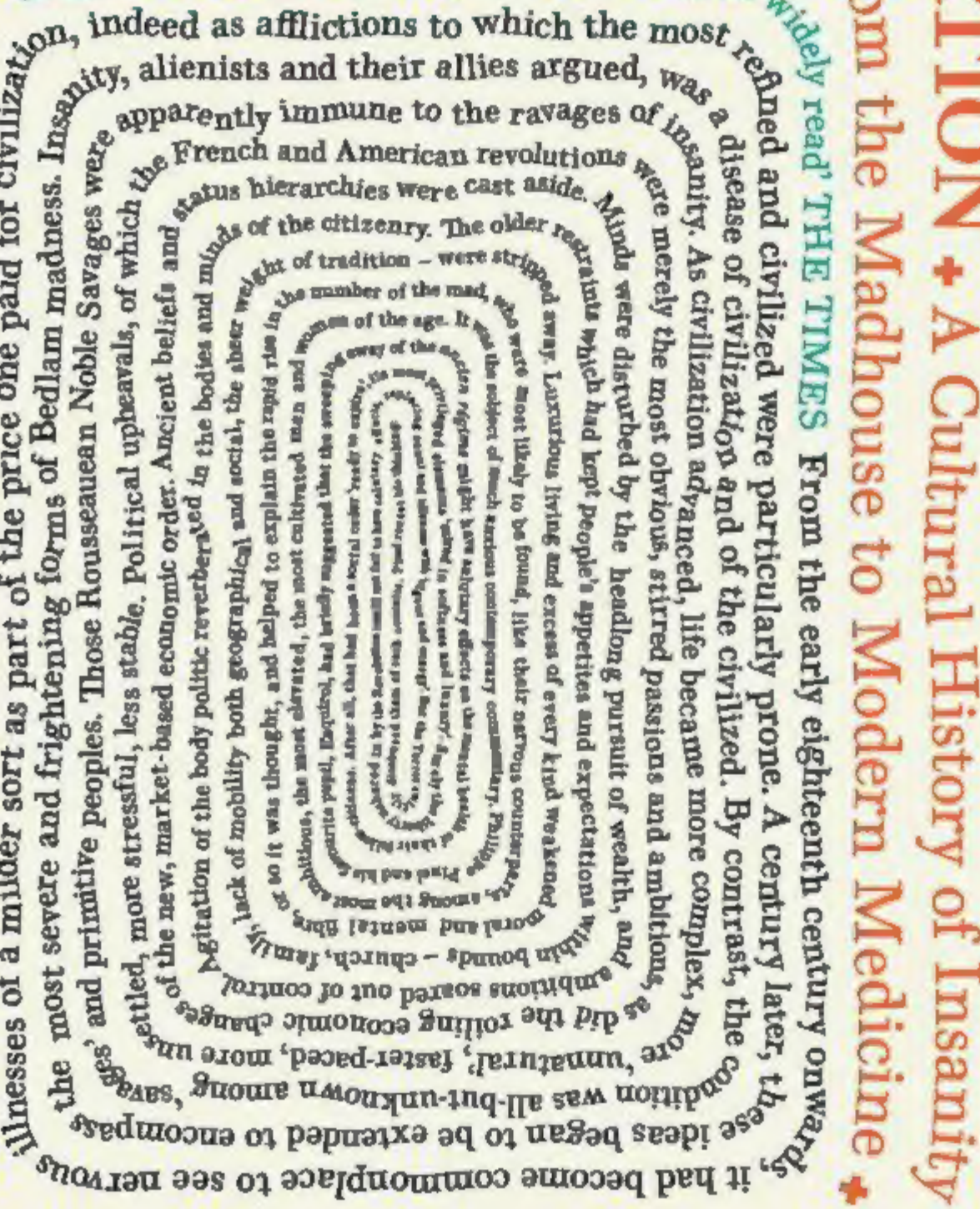
# MADNESS IN CIVILIZATION

## From the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine

'A brilliant cultural history ... deserves to be widely read' THE TIMES


From the early eighteenth century onwards, it had become commonplace to see nervous illnesses of a milder sort as part of the price one paid for civilization, indeed as afflictions to which the most refined and civilized were particularly prone. A century later, these ideas began to be extended to encompass the most severe and frightening forms of Bedlam madness. Insanity, alienists and their allies argued, was a disease of civilization and of the civilized. By contrast, the condition was all-but-unknown among 'savages' and primitive peoples. Those Rousseauean Noble Savages were apparently immune to the ravages of insanity. As civilization advanced, life became more complex, more 'unnatural', faster-paced, more unsettled, more stressful, less stable. Political upheavals, of which the French and American revolutions were merely the most obvious, stirred passions and ambitions, as did the rolling economic changes of the new, market-based economic order. Ancient beliefs and status hierarchies were cast aside. Minds were disturbed by the headlong pursuit of wealth, and ambitions soared out of control within bounds – church, family, moral and mental discipline – which had previously suppressed the most egotistical and unruly passions. Agitation of the body politic reverberated in the bodies and minds of the citizenry. The older restraints which had kept people's appetites and expectations